

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-05 L-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 RSC-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 COME-00

EB-07 SIL-01 LAB-04 /048 W  
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R 091932Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9003

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0107

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EAGR, HO

SUBJECT: PUBLIC AND PRESS REACTION TO NEW GOH AGRARIAN REFORM

LAW 170

BEGIN SUMMARY: LAW 170, LEY DE REFORMA AGRARIA PUBLISHED BY  
PRESS JANUARY 6 AND JANUARY 7 (OFFICIAL COPIES NOT AVAIL-  
ABLE). LAW TO BECOME EFFECTIVE JANUARY 14 WHEN PUBLISHED  
IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE. SUMMARY OF LAW UNDER PREPARATION. END SUMMARY:

1. GIVEN THE EMOTIONALISM INVOLVED IN FORMER DISCUSSIONS  
OF AGRARIAN REFORM PROPOSALS, THE PUBLIC REACTION TO THE  
RECENTLY RELEASED LAW SEEMS REMARKABLY MUTED. NEWSPAPER  
REPORTERS ASKING FOR COMMENTS HAVE BEEN TOLD IN MOST  
CASES EITHER THAT OPINIONS WILL BE FORTHCOMING FOLLOWING  
DETAILED STUDY OR THAT THE LAW SEEMS TO BE ACCEPTABLE BUT  
THAT ALL DEPENDS ON THE YET UNWRITTEN IMPLEMENTING REGU-  
LATIONS AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THE REGULATIONS ARE ENFORCED.

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2. IN ITS EDITORIAL COMMENT THE CONSERVATIVE SAN PEDRO

SULA NEWSPAPER LA PRENSA COMMENTED THAT DEMOGOGUES ON THE LEFT WOULD NOT BE CONTENT WITH THE NEW LAW SINCE IT CONSTITUTED REFORM RATHER THAN REVOLUTION. THIS ATTITUDE IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING IN VIEW OF LA PRESA'S EARLIER CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DRAFT LAW AS BEING RADICAL AND CON-FISCATORY. TIEMPO MADE NO QUANTITATIVE JUDGMENT AND LIMITED ITSELF TO ENUMERATING SEVERAL OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NEW AND OLD LAWS.

3. MOST LABOR AND COMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS HAVE EXPRESSED PLEASURE THAT THE LAW IS FINALLY WRITTEN BUT ARE DELAYING JUDGMENT UNTIL THE LAW CAN BE CAREFULLY STUDIED. ANACH (NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HONDURAN CAMPESINOS) AND UNC (NATIONAL CAMPESINO UNION) HAVE RESERVED COMMENT. ANACH HAS CALLED A SPECIAL ASSEMBLY TO EXAMINE THE LEGISLATION AND UNC WILL DEVOTE MUCH OF ITS JANUARY REGULAR CONGRESS TO THE LAW.

4. MEAT PACKING PLANTS, WHOSE PRESENT SYSTEM OF CATTLE BUYING REQUIRES EXTENSIVE LAND FOR PASTURES, HAVE ENTERED DISCUSSIONS AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL TO SEEK EXCEPTION FROM THE LAND HOLDING LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW. OTHER CATTLE INTERESTS EXAMINING LAW SEEKING LEGAL MODES OF RETAINING ECONOMICALLY Viable PARCELS OR SUBDIVIDING EXISTING HOLDINGS INTO SEPARATE CORPORATIONS.

5. LAW EXEMPTS LANDS DEVOTED TO BANANAS, PLATANOS, TOBACCO, COFFEE, SUGAR, PINEAPPLE, ICRUS AND AFRICAN PALM FROM EXPROPRIATION AS LONG AS EXPLOITATION IS EFFICIENT. UNITED BRANDS AND STANDARD BRANDS' ACREAGE IN THESE PRODUCTS THUS EXEMPTED, BUT NOT THEIR OTHER LAND HOLDINGS. COMPANY VIEWS EXPECTED SHORTLY.

6. CORN AND COTTON PRODUCERS DISMAYED BY ACREAGE LIMITATIONS, BUT REACTIONS ONLY PARTIAL WHILE STUDY BEING MADE OF OPTIONS.

7. HONDURAN PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATION (COHEP) HAS LAW UNDER EXAMINATION. INITIAL EXPECTATION IS THAT THERE WILL BE SHIFT OF LAND UTILIZATION TO EXEMPTED CROPS, AND  
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NO PRIVATE SECTOR NEW INVESTMENT IN OTHERS. DISVEST-MENT MAY OCCUR IN SOME CASES. COHEP BELIEVES CAPACITY OF GOH TO ADMINISTER LAW IS DUBIOUS. THE REPORT THAT ADMINISTRATING AGENCY (INSTITUTO NATIONAL AGRARIO) INA IS SENDING SEVEN STAFF PEOPLE FOR TRAINING IN PERU IS TAKEN AS OMEN OF FUTURE. FINALLY, COHEP LEADERSHIP SEES AGRARIAN REFORM LAW AS ADDITIONAL SIGNPOST OF THIS GOVERNMENT'S TREND TOWARDS STATISM AND ANOTHER NAIL IN

COFFIN OF PRIVATE SECTOR FUTURE IN HONDURAS.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, AGRICULTURAL LAW, LAND REFORMS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 09 JAN 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975TEGUCI00107  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750009-0659  
**From:** TEGUCIGALPA  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750164/aaaacejd.tel  
**Line Count:** 117  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 08 SEP 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <08 SEP 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <14 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PUBLIC AND PRESS REACTION TO NEW GOH AGRARIAN REFORM LAW 170  
**TAGS:** PINT, EAGR, HO  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006